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Oct 5, 2024 - Politics &amp; Policy

# Trump keeps calling Venezuelan and Congolese migrants criminals

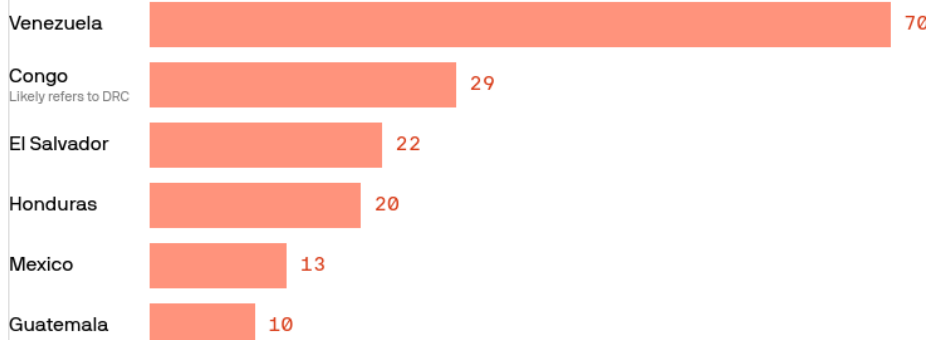


Russell Contreras, Delano Massey, Erin Davis



## Number of times Trump has called migrants from select countries "criminals"

From 109 speeches, interviews, debates and rallies held between Sept. 1, 2023, and Oct. 2, 2024



Data: Axios analysis of [rev.com](#) transcripts; Note: Multiple mentions in a single paragraph are counted as one instance; Chart: Axios Visuals

Former [President Trump](#) has referred to [Venezuelan](#) and [Congolese](#) migrants as criminals dozens of times since September 2023, an Axios analysis has found.

**The big picture:** In a 13-month span, Trump's speeches about migrants have become darker and apocalyptic with baseless claims the migrants have criminal records, are [eating pets](#) and could start ["World War III."](#)

- The unfounded accusations about migrants from African, Asian, Middle Eastern and Latin American countries come as the GOP presidential nominee pushes for [mass deportations](#) of immigrants.

**By the numbers:** An Axios analysis of 109 of Trump's speeches, debates and interviews

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**By the numbers:** An Axios analysis of 109 of Trump's speeches, debates and interviews found that he has called Venezuelan migrants criminals 70 times and Congolese migrants criminals 29 times from Sept. 1, 2023, to Oct. 2, 2024.

- He's also called migrants from El Salvador criminals 22 times and those from Honduras criminals 20 times. Trump called migrants from Mexico criminals 13 times and migrants from Guatemala criminals 10 times.
- Of the remarks analyzed by Axios, no European countries appeared on the list.

**Karoline Leavitt**, national press secretary for the Trump campaign, failed to directly answer why Trump has referred to migrants from various countries as criminals.

- In a statement, Leavitt said the Biden-Harris administration reversed many of the former president's immigration policies, creating a national security crisis on our southern border.
- Leavitt said Trump will restore his policies and launch "crackdowns that will send shockwaves to all the world's criminal smugglers, and marshal every federal and state power necessary" for his deportation plan.

**State of play:** Trump's comments about migrants (in the country illegally or with temporary status) with criminal records usually follow his promise to remove many migrants from cities with changing demographics.

- He repeatedly has [shared false claims](#) about Haitian [immigrants eating pets](#) in [Springfield, Ohio](#) and vowed to revoke the [immigration status for Haitian migrants](#) who are living legally in the U.S.
- Trump also has promised to end [birthright citizenship](#) for American-born children of migrants as outlined in the [14th Amendment](#) of the U.S. Constitution.
- [Trump](#) has repeatedly said undocumented immigrants are "[poisoning the blood of our country](#)," language echoing the rhetoric of white supremacists and fascist dictator [Adolf Hitler](#).

**Reality check:** [Study](#) after [study](#) has found that immigrants commit less crime than their American-born counterparts, despite the elevation of individual cases like the death of Georgia nursing student [Laken Riley](#).

- [A three-year Axios analysis](#) of violent crime on the U.S.-Mexico border, home to millions of immigrants, found that cities there have lower violent crime rates than the rest of the nation.

**Zoom in:** Per the Migration Policy Institute, there is no evidence that any country is emptying prisons to allow violent criminals to come to the U.S. border as migrants despite Trump's repeated claims "the Congo" is doing so.

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- The governments of both the Democratic Republic of Congo and the neighboring Republic of Congo [told](#) CNN Trump’s assertions are false.

**What they’re saying:** Donald Tomaskovic-Devey, a sociology professor at UMass Amherst, says using such rhetoric is a strategy that has lived on for decades.

- Tomaskovic-Devey points out that this was an issue in 2016, when "it was the Mexicans and then terrorists from the Middle East."
- "Now it's basically every part of the world outside of Western Europe and the US," he said, adding that these narratives reinforce a longstanding trope, collapsing internal and external threats into one overarching fear of "the other."
- If we go back to the 1950s in the US, Tomaskovic-Devey said the political recipe was "the threat of Black labor and the threat of the Russians," which mobilized voters in the South.

**Context:** Some of the migrants from countries targeted by Trump are here in the country legally under Temporary Protected Status.

- TSP is a federal program that allows migrants from some countries to legally live in the United States for a certain period when the conditions in their home country are unsafe.
- Migrants from Haiti, Afghanistan, Ukraine and Venezuela are among some countries eligible for the program, requiring participants to re-register with the Department of Homeland Security each year.



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Russell Contreras, Avery Lotz  
Jan 28, 2025 - Politics & Policy

## All undocumented immigrants are "criminals," Trump administration says





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Karoline Leavitt, White House press secretary, during a news conference in the White House in Washington, D.C., on Jan. 28, 2025. Photo: Samuel Corum/Politico/Bloomberg via Getty Images

White House press secretary Karoline Leavitt confirmed [immigrant rights groups'](#) fears that the Trump administration sees all undocumented immigrants as "[criminals](#)" and isn't just seeking to deport those who commit violent acts.

**Driving the news:** In her [first White House briefing](#), Leavitt falsely labeled all 3,500 immigrants arrested for suspicion of being in the country illegally "criminals." Being in the country illegally is a civil violation, not a criminal one, and the individuals who were arrested have not been convicted of a crime.

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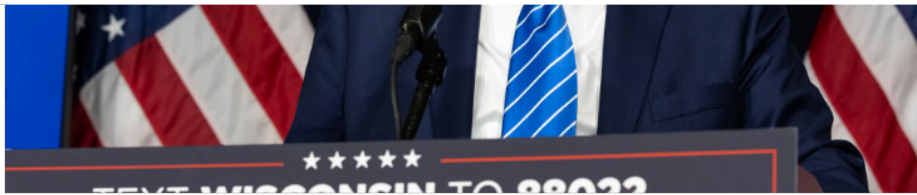
## Trump floats deporting legal Haitian migrants living in Ohio



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Former President and Republican presidential nominee Donald Trump speaks at a press conference Oct. 1 in Milwaukee. Photo: Jim Vondruska/Getty Images

[Former President Trump](#) said Wednesday he would revoke immigration status for Haitian migrants who are living legally in the U.S.

**Why it matters:** The comments mark yet another escalation in the GOP presidential nominee's rhetoric about immigration — this time targeting legal immigrants — and come after he repeatedly [shared false claims](#) about Haitian [immigrants eating pets](#) in [Springfield, Ohio](#).

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Russell Contreras  
Jan 27, 2025 - Politics & Policy

## Why Trump won't be deporting "millions" of criminals



Illustration: Allie Carl/Axios

[President Trump](#) claims that his administration will quickly deport ["millions and millions"](#) of "illegal aliens" with criminal records.

- Those millions don't exist.

**The big picture:** Less than 1% of immigrants deported last fiscal year were kicked out of the U.S. for crimes other than immigration violations. In the past 40 years, federal officials have documented about [425,000](#) noncitizens with criminal convictions on the ICE's "non-

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Illustration: Allie Carl/Axios

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